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Lamenting Larks

Starting Sunday, little kids can stay out longer, big kids and adults can get home from work before the street lights go on and householders can save a few pennies on the electric bill. It's the beginning of daylight saving time, an idea for energy-saving that originated in Britain in 1907 and, since the energy crisis of the 1970's, starts in this country on the first Sunday of April. That being April 1, it's showing up very early.

For some Americans, though, this setting of the clock an hour later than real time marks the darkest day of the year. They're larks, so called because their interior clocks are tuned to dawn. The last few weeks of waking to a pearl-gray morning have been paradise for them.

So while the nation's owls are glad because they're gaining light at the day's end, larks are sad because they're losing light at its beginning. The breath spent telling them about early-evening cookouts and post-supper

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strolls in the twilight is breath wasted. For those who like to open their eyes on John Donne's "unruly sun," this will be Gloomy Sunday.

Unreal Estate

In a recent letter to The Times, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York observed that secret protocols to the Molotov-Ribbentrop nonaggression pact in 1939 assigned Estonia and Latvia to the Soviet Union's "sphere of influence" and Lithuania to Nazi Germany's. Subsequently, he noted, Stalin paid Germany \$7.5 million in gold to get Lithuania, too.

Armchair historians may see a coincidence with the price Moscow got for Alaska in 1867: \$7.2 million. Every schoolchild knows that "Seward's Folly" turned out to be no folly, producing endless vistas and boundless wealth.

But any comparison ends right there. Alaska was Russia's land to sell. By what right did Hitler sell sovereign Lithuania, and by what right did Stalin buy it?